



## Avebury Summer Solstice 2003



Well here we are again, another solstice, another fight with the ill-fitting shrubbery (at least one of us has put on weight since last year!)

We left on our travels slightly earlier this year, determined to make it to the pub before last orders. And arrived in plenty of time, along with what appeared to be half the population of Wiltshire (and Scotland!). Although I suspect we had at least one guardian angel helping this year, the car that had a tyre blow out whilst doing at least 90mph in the outside lane overtaking us shouldn't have just been able to pull over and completely miss us.... We were greeted by a mysterious lack of cars, soon explained by the local police, apparently no parking in the village this year, and Stonehenge carpark wasn't opening until midnight so everyone was hanging out in Avebury and the surrounding area.

After a small discussion with the local police sergeant about the impossibility of one of us walking back from the nearest lay-by (well we thought only having three natural legs between two of us constituted good reason), we were allowed to tuck the car away somewhere inconspicuous. Thanks to the boys in blue! (well, more like boys in luminous yellow, but that doesn't sound so good). Then off to the pub for refreshment, narrowly avoiding being toppled over by a boisterous drunk on the way.

After a small tour of the sights (human ones that is - note to self, need more shrubbery and antlers next year), it was off to the field to stake a place amongst the stones. Unpacked the vital solstice equipment, consisting mainly of woolly jumpers and very thick coats, but including the obligatory cape, fruit-bat stylee, and enough incense to keep a small country going for a year.

The usual entertainments kept us going through the night, jugglers, drummers, etc, but with the added extras this year of an exceptionally entertaining band complete with small children with lanterns, and occasional fireworks just to keep us awake. A small amount of excitement was generated by the sight of the local police towing everyone's cars away, a quick recce ascertained that ours was still safe and cosy.

A prodigious amount of incense was burnt, having a three-fold effect - to celebrate the solstice in the traditional manner, to make us smell nice (well you try staying up all night in a field), and it was also remarkably good at keeping my toes nice and warm (except when the burner pot tipped over, when my toes got a little too hot).

As dawn approached, we decided to make our way to the top of the earthwork to greet the sun. This year, the dawn was pretty spectacular. Low lying cloud was lit up from underneath in various shades of pink, red and orange, with some swirly black bits for artistic counterpoint. Ignoring the small group of drunken teenagers, and the small but far louder group of drunken Scots (who had managed to find their way out from the toilets, where they spent at least part of the night lying on the floor doing drunk-people things), we faced the rising sun and marvelled. No, really, it was THAT good. Even when I went temporarily blind after looking for a bit too long, it was still THAT good.

So look at the pictures and feel regret that you weren't there to share in another of nature's spectacular moments.









A landscape photograph of a sunset. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, with a bright orange and yellow glow from the sun just below the horizon. The foreground is in silhouette, showing a dark line of trees and a field. The text "para.science" is overlaid in a white, serif font in the upper-middle part of the image.

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A landscape photograph of a sunset, similar to the one above but with a different lighting. The sky is dominated by a vibrant orange and red glow, with some darker clouds. The sun is visible as a bright line on the horizon. The foreground is in silhouette, showing a dark line of trees and a field. The text "para.science" is overlaid in a white, serif font in the upper-middle part of the image.

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